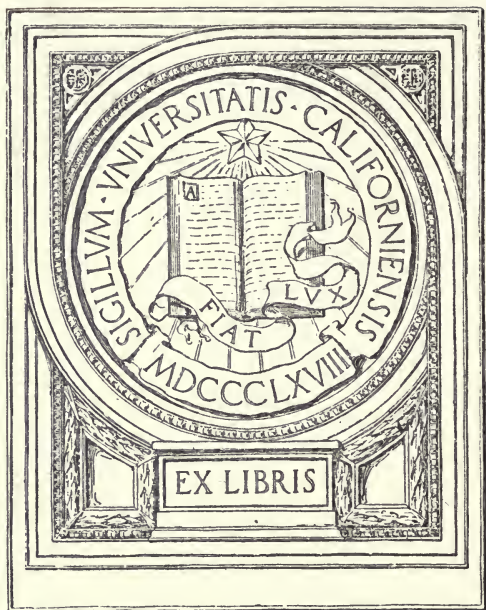


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Sepulture

of

Major General Nathanael Greene,

and of

Brig: Gen: Count Casimir Pulaski,

by

Charles C. Jones, Jr., LL.D.

The Bancroft Library

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Augusta, Ga., 1885

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THE SEPULTURE
OF
MAJOR GEN. NATHANAEL GREENE,
AND OF
BRIG. GEN. COUNT CASIMIR PULASKI.

I. On the 20th of April, 1786, General Nathanael Greene was interred, with all the pomp and circumstance at command, in the old cemetery in Savannah. After a short and violent illness he had died at his plantation on the Savannah river, a few miles above Savannah, and his body was transported by water to that town for sepulture. As the boat conveying his remains neared the wharf, and until his coffin was deposited in the tomb, minute guns were discharged from Fort Wayne. The ships in port displayed their colors at half-mast. All the shops were closed; and the inhabitants, suspending their customary avocations, united in testifying universal sorrow at the death of one who, among the Generals of the Revolution, occupied in the public esteem a place second only to that conceded to Washing-

ton. The procession, then formed, consisted of

The Chatham Artillery:

The Light Infantry:

The Militia of Chatham County:

Clergymen and Physicians:

A Band of Music:

The corpse and pall-bearers, escorted on each side by a company of dragoons:

The chief mourners:

The members of the Order of Cincinnati:

The Speaker of the House of Assembly and other civil officers of the State; and lastly, of citizens and strangers.

Meeting the corpse with its immediate attendants at the landing, the funeral cortege, about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, took up the line of march for the cemetery,—the band playing the Dead March in Saul, and the artillery firing minute guns as it advanced. When the graveyard was reached the military formed on the right and left, and rested on reversed arms. In the absence of an Episcopal clergyman, the funeral service of the Church of England was read by the Honorable William Stephens, and the corpse deposited in a vault. The ceremony was terminated by a salute of thirteen guns from the artillery, and three volleys from the infantry. In the language of an eyewitness of this impressive rite, "the whole was conducted with a solemnity suitable to the occasion."

Contemporaneous accounts do not

specify the precise vault in which the coffin of General Greene was lodged.

It will be remembered that in consideration of his distinguished services during the war of the Revolution, and as an acknowledgment of the gratitude entertained by the people of Georgia for his conduct while in command of the Southern Department, and especially for his good offices in detaching General Wayne to expel the King's forces from the limits of the State, the General Assembly adopted the following preamble and resolutions;

“Whereas, the Honorable Major General Greene hath, since his taking the command of the Southern Army, rendered high and important services to the Southern States, by wresting them from the hand of British oppression, and establishing the foundation of their independence and prosperity:

And, whereas, services so glorious and honorable to the United States in general, and this State in particular—services which at once characterize the able and judicious General as well as the intrepid asserter of American freedom—call for the distinguished approbation of the Legislature of this State;

Be it therefore resolved; That the sum of five thousand guineas be granted to three commissioners, to be appointed by the House, for the purpose of purchasing an estate for Major-General Nathanael Greene in

such part or parts of the State as he shall appoint.

Resolved; That the said commissioners be empowered and authorized to draw on, and receive the said sum of five thousand guineas from, the public treasury of the State."

These resolutions were carried into effect by the commissioners appointed for that purpose, who in due course reported that they had, upon the sale of confiscated estates, purchased for General Greene, at a cost of £7,097 19s., Mulberry Grove plantation, containing two thousand one hundred and seventy-one acres, late the property of John Grahame, royal Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Georgia.

So soon as his public duties permitted, and his family could be conveniently removed from Rhode Island, General Greene here fixed his home and gave to the cultivation of these lands his earnest and intelligent attention. In happy mood did he, at this time, write to his friends of the interest he took in his agricultural operations, of the attractions of his new abode, of its gardens, its flowers and forests, of the mocking birds from morning until evening filling the air with sweetest melody, of the balmy atmosphere, and of the hospitable attentions of his neighbors.

Lieutenant-Governor Grahame had builded a family vault in the Savannah cemetery and, by many, this possession was regarded as appur-

tenant to Mulberry Grove plantation.

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While the proof is not conclusive, the tradition lives and is generally accepted that upon the conclusion of the funeral services of the 20th of April, 1786, the coffin of General Greene was deposited in the Grahame vault, which was substantially constructed of brick. That coffin, of wood, strongly made, was surmounted by a metal plate whereon were engraven the name, rank, date of birth, and time of death of the Revolutionary hero. Here all that was mortal of this friend of Washington was supposed to be resting in undisturbed repose.

Anxious to testify by an enduring monument their respect for the memory alike of General Greene and of Count Pulaski, the citizens of Savannah, early in the present century, endeavored to raise a fund sufficient for that purpose. In 1820 a committee was empowered by the Mayor and Aldermen of the town to search for and locate the remains of General Greene, with a view to placing them beneath that monument when the necessary arrangements for its erection should have been completed. That committee failed to find any trace of the coffin of that famous General. All inquiries instituted by its members in explanation of the cause of its disappearance remained unsatisfied.

Deeming the visit of General Lafayette most opportune for consummating a purpose long delayed,

the citizens of Savannah invoked his services in laying the corner stones of two monuments—one in memory of General Greene and the other in honor of Count Pulaski. On the 21st of March, 1825, with appropriate ceremonies and patriotic addresses, the Marquis laid, in Johnson square, the corner stone of a monument to be erected in perpetuation of the memory of General Greene, and another in Chippewa square to designate the spot upon which a shaft should lift its enduring head in honor of Count Pulaski. The former bore this inscription: "This corner-stone of a monument to the memory of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Greene was laid by General Lafayette, at the request of the citizens of Savannah, on the 21st of March, A. D. 1825." The latter was inscribed as follows: "On the 21st day of March, A. D. 1825, was laid by General Lafayette, at the request of the citizens of Savannah, this Foundation Stone of a monument to the memory of Brigadier Count Pulaski."

The effort to collect funds for the erection of mortuary shafts is often accompanied by perplexing delays and disappointments. To facilitate the matter in the present instance, the General Assembly of Georgia, on the 30th of November, 1826, passed an act empowering certain commissioners to raise by lottery the sum of thirty-five thousand dollars "for the purpose of aiding the erection of monuments to the memory of Gen-

eral Greene and of Count Pulaski in the city of Savannah—the place already consecrated by the blood of the one and the ashes of the other.”

About twelve years after the laying of the corner stones by General Lafayette, sufficient moneys having been realized to defray the cost of its construction, the monument now standing in Johnson square was builded in honor both of General Greene and of Count Pulaski, and continued to be known as the Greene and Pulaski monument until, in 1853, the corner stone was laid in Monterey square of a monument in honor of Count Pulaski. From that time to the present day the simple structure in Johnson square has remained consecrate to the memory of Gen. Greene alone.

The corner stone laid by General Lafayette in 1825, in Chippewa square, of the monument intended to commemorate on that spot the virtues and the devotion of the gallant Pole, was removed and united to the Greene corner stone in Johnson square when the present shaft was there constructed in joint memory of Greene and Pulaski. In 1853, however, this Pulaski corner stone was detached from the Greene and Pulaski monument in Johnson square, and was placed, with imposing ceremonies, in association with another corner stone beneath the beautiful mortuary structure which now, in Monterey square, by its presence embodies the gratitude of suc-

ceeding generations and enkindles a generous emulation of that disinterested devotion to, and love of, freedom and right which glowed in the breast and marked the career of Pulaski.

It has been suggested that the search for the remains of General Greene, instituted by the committee appointed for that purpose, was not thorough. Judge Johnson, when writing in 1820, intimated that a more careful inquiry might have accomplished more satisfactory results, and hinted that the coffin might have been removed from the Grahame vault to that of the Jones family.

There is another explanation of the disappearance of the remains of General Greene. It rests upon tradition and is not devoid of probability. The Grahames, who adhered to the cause of their King, and who departed from Georgia when the British troops were withdrawn, were necessarily incensed at the loss of their estates, and the confiscation of their property by the successful Revolutionists. Their personal misfortunes intensified the hatred which, as loyal subjects, they entertained towards those who had been instrumental in compassing the overthrow of kingly rule in Georgia. The thought that a rebel Major General should lie entombed in their vault was revolting and harrowing to their feelings. It is believed that some member of that family caused a secret removal

of the remains of General Greene from that vault, and their reinterment in an unmarked grave. After the lapse of so many years it is entirely probable that their present resting place will never be discovered.

II. While the assault, launched by the combined armies of Count d'Estaing and Gen. Lincoln against the British lines around Savannah on the morning of the 9th of October, 1779, was raging, Count Pulaski, with the approval of the American commander, attempted, at the head of some 200 cavalrymen, to force a passage between the enemy's works. His purpose was to penetrate within the town, pass in rear of the hostile lines, and carry confusion and havoc into the English camp. In the execution of this design he advanced at full speed until arrested by the abattis. Here his command encountered a heavy cross-fire from the batteries, which threw it into confusion. The Count himself was unhorsed by a canister shot which, penetrating his right thigh, inflicted a mortal wound. He was borne from the bloody field, and, after the conflict was over, was conveyed on board the United States brig *Wasp* to go round to Charlestown. He was so terribly wounded that he could not withdraw with the American forces under Lincoln. Delayed by headwinds, the ship remained several days in Savannah River. During this time he was attended by skillful surgeons

from the French fleet. It was found impossible to establish suppuration, and gangrene supervened. As the *Wasp* was leaving the river on her way to Charlestown, Pulaski breathed his last. His corpse became so offensive that Colonel Bentalou, his officer in attendance, "was compelled, though reluctantly, to consign to a watery grave all that was now left upon earth of his beloved and honored commander."

Such, in a word, is a statement of the death and burial of this dashing officer who, unable to win the independence of his own country, lost his life in the brave effort to achieve the liberties of the American colonies.

We have already alluded to the early efforts made in Savannah to do honor to his memory. They culminated at first in the erection of the joint monument to General Greene and himself in Johnson square. Subsequently, the corner-stone of the new monument in Monterey square was laid; and, in December of the following year, the admirable memorial structure, designed and erected by Launitz, was completed. Early in January, 1855, it was committed to the keeping of the Mayor and Aldermen of Savannah as a part of the public property of the city.

Beneath this monument were deposited human remains—exhumed at Greenwich, on Augustine creek—which were represented to be those of Count Pulaski. Accompanying

the published account of the ceremonies observed upon laying the corner-stone, and also upon the dedication of the Pulaski monument, is a statement by Colonel Bowen of the circumstances, traditions, and arguments which led him to believe that the skeleton, removed from Greenwich and interred beneath the monument, was indeed that of Count Pulaski. Curious as the narrative is, there can be no doubt but that the bones unearthed on the bluff of Augustine creek were those of some unknown individual, and not of the Polish cavalry leader. He did not die at Greenwich, and was not there interred. He sleeps where the ebbing tide of the Savannah meets and commingles with the waters of the broad Atlantic. Fit resting place for a hero of such expansive soul! He sleeps where the praises in honor of his great deeds, sung by the waves of the Savannah as they kiss the shore consecrated by his valorous deeds, are caught up by the billows of ocean and are by them joyfully repeated in wider circles, in more heroic strains. He sleeps where the ambient air, fragrant with the perfumes of a land whose freedom he died to achieve, tells to Atlantic breezes the story of his martyrdom that they too, in glad acclaim, may answer back to the farthest coast the greatness of his fame. By a strange coincidence the beloved of Mars rests in the embrace of Neptune.

III. It thus appears that neither of

